

[From Bentley's Miscellany.]

A MIDNIGHT DRIVE.—A TALE OF TERROR.

I WAS sitting one night in the general coach-office in the town of —, reflecting upon the mutability of human affairs, and taking a retrospective glance at those times when I held a very different position in the world, when one of the porters of the establishment entered the office, and informed the clerk that the coach, which had long been expected, was in sight, and would be at the inn in a few minutes. I believe it was the old Highflyer, but at this distance of time I can not speak with sufficient certainty. The strange story I am about to relate, occurred when stage-coaches were the usual mode of conveyance, and long before any more expeditious system of traveling had engaged the attention of mankind.

I continued to sit by the fire till the coach arrived, and then walked into the street to count the number of the passengers, and observe their appearance. I was particularly struck with the appearance of one gentleman, who had ridden as an inside passenger. He wore a large black cloak, deeply trimmed with crape; his head was covered with a black traveling-cap, surmounted with two or three crape rosettes, and from which depended a long black tassel. The cap was drawn so far over his eyes that he had some difficulty to see his way. A black scarf was wrapped round the lower part of his face, so that his countenance was completely concealed from my view. He appeared anxious to avoid observation, and hurried into the inn as fast as he could. I returned to the office and mentioned to the clerk the strange appearance of the gentlemen in question, but he was too busy to pay any attention to what I had said.

Presently afterward a porter brought a small carpet-bag into the office, and placed it upon the table

"Whose bag is that, Timms?" inquired the clerk.

"I don't wish to be personal," replied the man, "but I think it belongs to —," and the fellow pointed to the floor.

"You don't mean *him*, surely?" said the clerk.

"Yes, I do though; at any rate, if he is not the gentleman I take him for, he must be a second cousin of his, for he is the most unaccountable individual that ever I clapped my eyes on. There is not much good in him, I'll be bound."

I listened with breathless anxiety to these words. When the man had finished, I said to him,

"How was the gentleman dressed?"

"In black."

"Had he a cloak on?"

"Yes."

"A traveling-cap drawn over his eyes?"

"Yes."

"It's the man I saw descend from the coach," I said to the clerk.

"Where is he?" inquired that gentleman.

"In the inn," replied the porter.

"Is he going to stay all night?" I inquired.

"I don't know."

"It's very odd," observed the clerk, and he put his pen behind his ear, and placed himself in front of the fire; "very odd," he repeated.

"It don't look well," said the porter; "not at all."

Some further conversation ensued upon the subject, but as it did not tend to throw any light upon the personage in question, it is unnecessary for me to relate it.

Awhile afterward, the clerk went into the hotel to learn, if possible, something more relative to this singular visitor. He was not absent more than a few minutes, and when he returned his countenance, I fancied, was more sedate than usual. I asked him if he had gathered any further information.

"There is nobody knows any thing concerning him," he replied; "for when the servants enter the room, he always turns his back toward them. He has not spoken to a single individual since he arrived. There is a man who came by the same coach, who attends upon him, but he does not look like a servant."

"There is something extraordinary in his history, or I am much deceived."

"I am quite of your opinion," observed the clerk.

While we were conversing, some persons entered the office to take places by the mail, which was to leave early on the following morning. I hereupon departed, and entered the inn with the view of satisfying my curiosity, if possible, which was now raised to the utmost pitch. The servants, I remarked, moved about more silently than usual, and sometimes I saw two or three of them conversing together, *sotto voce*, as though they did not wish their conversation to be overheard by those around them.

I knew the room that the gentleman occupied, and stealthily and unobserved stole up to it, hoping to hear or see something that might throw some light upon his character. I was not, however, gratified in either respect.

I hastened back to the office and resumed my seat by the fire. The clerk and I were still conversing upon the subject, when one of the girls came in, and informed me that I was to get a horse and gig ready immediately, to drive a gentleman a distance of fifteen or twenty miles.

"To-night!" I said in surprise.

"Immediately!"

"Why, it's already ten o'clock!"

"It's the master's orders; I can not alter them," tartly replied the girl.

This unwelcome intelligence caused me to commit a great deal of sin, for I made use of a number of imprecations and expressions which were quite superfluous and perfectly unavailing. It was not long before I was ready to commence the journey. I chose the fastest and strongest animal in the establishment, and one that had never failed me in an emergency. I lit the lamps, for the night was intensely dark, and I felt convinced that we should require them. The proprietor of the hotel gave me a paper, but told me not to read it till we had proceeded a few miles on the road, and informed me at the same time in what direction to drive. The paper, he added, would give me further instructions.

I was seated in the vehicle, busily engaged in fastening the leathern apron on the side on which I sat, in order to protect my limbs from the cold, when somebody seated himself beside me. I heard the landlord cry, "Drive on;" and, without looking round, I lashed the mare into a very fast trot. Even now, while I write, I feel in some degree the trepidation which stole over me when I discovered who my companion was. I had not gone far before I was made acquainted with this astounding fact. It was as though an electric shock had suddenly and unexpectedly been imparted to my frame, or as, in a moment of perfect happiness, I had been hastily plunged into the greatest danger and distress. A benumbing chilliness ran through me, and my mouth all at once became dry and parched. Whither was I to drive? I knew not. Who and what was my companion? I was equally ignorant. It was the man dressed so fantastically whom I had seen alight from the coach; whose appearance and inexplicable conduct had alarmed a whole establishment; whose character was a matter of speculation to every body with whom he had come in contact. This was the substance of my knowledge. For aught I knew, he might be— But no matter. The question that most concerned me was, how was I to extricate myself from this dilemma? Which was the best course to adopt? To turn back, and declare I would not travel in such a night, with so strange a person, or to proceed on my journey? I greatly feared the conse-

quences of the former step would be fatal to my own interests. Besides, I should be exposed to the sneers and laughter of all who knew me. No: I had started, and I would proceed, whatever might be the issue of the adventure.

In a few minutes we had emerged from the town. My courage was now put to the severest test. The cheerful aspect of the streets, and the light thrown from the lamps and a few shop-windows, had hitherto buoyed me up, but my energy and firmness, I felt, were beginning to desert me. The road on which we had entered was not a great thoroughfare at any time, but at that late hour of the night I did not expect to meet either horseman or pedestrian to enliven the long and solitary journey. I cast my eyes before me, but could not discern a single light burning in the distance. The night was thick and unwholesome, and not a star was to be seen in the heavens. There was another matter which caused me great uneasiness. I was quite unarmed, and unprepared for any attack, should my companion be disposed to take advantage of that circumstance. These things flashed across my mind, and made a more forcible impression than they might otherwise have done, from the fact of a murder having been committed in the district only a few weeks before, under the most aggravated circumstances. An hypothesis suggested itself. Was this man the perpetrator of that deed—the wretch who was endeavoring to escape from the officers of justice, and who was stigmatized with the foulest, the blackest crime that man could be guilty of? Appearances were against him. Why should he invest himself with such a mystery? Why conceal his face in so unaccountable a manner? What but a man conscious of great guilt, of the darkest crimes, would so furtively enter an inn, and afterward steal away under the darkness of the night, when no mortal eye could behold him? If he was sensible of innocence, he might have deferred his journey till the morning, and faced, with the fortitude of a man, the broad light of day, and the scrutiny of his fellow-men. I say, appearances were against him, and I felt more and more convinced, that whatever his character was—whatever his deeds might have been—that the present journey was instigated by fear and apprehension for his personal safety. But was I to be the instrument of his deliverance? Was I to be put to all this inconvenience in order to favor the escape of an assassin? The thought distracted me. I vowed that it should not be so. My heart chafed and fretted at the task that had been put upon me. My blood boiled with indignation at the bare idea of being made the tool of so unhallowed a purpose. I was resolved. I ground my teeth with rage. I grasped the reins with a tighter hold. I determined to be rid of the man—nay, even to attempt to destroy him rather than it should be said that I had assisted in his escape. At some distance further on there was a river suitable for that purpose. When off his guard, he could

in a moment be pushed into the stream; in certain places it was sufficiently deep to drown him. One circumstance perplexed me. If he escaped, he could adduce evidence against me. No matter; it would be difficult to prove that I had any intention of taking away his life. But should he be the person I conceived, he would not dare to come forward.

Hitherto we had ridden without exchanging a word. Indeed, I had only once turned my eyes upon him since we started. The truth was, I was too busy with my own thoughts—too intent upon devising some plan to liberate myself from my unparalleled situation. I now cast my eyes furtively toward him. I shuddered as I contemplated his proximation to myself. I fancied I already felt his contaminating influence. The cap, as before, was drawn over his face; the scarf muffled closely round his chin, and only sufficient space allowed for the purpose of respiration. I was most desirous of knowing who he was; indeed, had he been "the Man with the Iron Mask," so many years incarcerated in the French Bastille, he could scarcely have excited a greater curiosity.

I deemed it prudent to endeavor to draw him into conversation, thinking that he might drop some expression that would, in some measure, tend to elucidate his history. Accordingly, I said,

"It's a very dark, unhealthy night, sir."

He made no reply. I thought he might not have heard me.

"A bad night for traveling!" I shouted, in a loud tone of voice.

The man remained immovable, without in the least deigning to notice my observation. He either did not wish to talk, or he was deaf. If he wished to be silent, I was contented to let him remain so.

It had not occurred to me till now that I had received a paper from the landlord which would inform me whither my extraordinary companion was to be conveyed. My heart suddenly received a new impulse—it beat with hope and expectation. This document might reveal to me something more than I was led to expect; it might unravel the labyrinth in which I was entangled, and extricate me from all further difficulty. But how was I to decipher the writing? There was no other means of doing so than by stopping the vehicle and alighting, and endeavoring to read it by the aid of the lamp, which, I feared, would afford but a very imperfect light, after all. Before I had recourse to this plan, I deemed it expedient to address once more my taciturn companion.

"Where am I to drive you to?" I inquired, in so loud a voice that the mare started off at a brisker pace, as though I had been speaking to her. I received no reply, and, without further hesitation, I drew in the reins, pulled the paper from my pocket, and alighted. I walked to the lamp, and held the paper as near to it as I could. The handwriting was not very legible, and the light afforded me so weak, that I had great

difficulty to discover its meaning. The words were few and pointed. The reader will judge of my surprise when I read the following laconic sentence: "*Drive the gentleman to Grayburn Church-yard!*" I was more alarmed than ever; my limbs shook violently, and in an instant I felt the blood fly from my cheeks. What did my employer mean by imposing such a task upon me? My fortitude in some degree returned, and I walked up to the mare and patted her on the neck.

"Poor thing—poor thing!" I said; "you have a long journey before you, and it may be a dangerous one."

I looked at my companion, but he appeared to take no notice of my actions, and seemed as indifferent as if he were a corpse. I again resumed my seat, and in part consoled myself with the prospect of being speedily rid of him in some way or other, as the river I have already alluded to was now only two or three miles distant. My thoughts now turned to the extraordinary place to which I was to drive—Grayburn Church-yard! What could the man do there at that hour of the night? Had he somebody to meet? something to see or obtain? It was incomprehensible—beyond the possibility of human divination. Was he insane, or was he bent upon an errand perfectly rational, although for the present wrapped in the most impenetrable mystery? I am at a loss for language adequate to convey a proper notion of my feelings on that occasion. He shall never arrive, I internally ejaculated, at Grayburn Church-yard; he shall never pass beyond the stream, which even now I almost heard murmuring in the distance! Heaven forgive me for harboring such intentions! but when I reflected that I might be assisting an assassin to fly from justice, I conceived I was acting perfectly correct in adopting any means (no matter how bad) for the obviating of so horrid a consummation. For aught I know, his present intention might be to visit the grave of his victim, for now I remembered that the person who had so lately been murdered was interred in this very church-yard.

We gradually drew nearer to the river. I heard its roaring with fear and trepidation. It smote my heart with awe when I pondered upon the deed I had in contemplation. I could discover, from its rushing sound, that it was much swollen, and this was owing to the recent heavy rains. The stream in fine weather was seldom more than a couple of feet deep, and could be crossed without danger or difficulty; there however were places where it was considerably deeper. On the occasion in question, it was more dangerous than I had ever known it. There was no bridge constructed across it at this place, and people were obliged to get through it as well as they could. Nearer and nearer we approached. The night was so dark that it was quite impossible to discern any thing. I could feel the beatings of my heart against my breast, a cold, clammy sweat settled upon my brow, and my mouth became so dry that I fancied I was

choking. The moment was at hand that was to put my resolution to the test. A few yards only separated us from the spot that was to terminate my journey, and, perhaps, the mortal career of my incomprehensible companion. The light of the lamps threw a dull, lurid gleam upon the surface of the water. It rushed furiously past, surging and boiling as it leaped over the rocks that here and there intersected its channel. Without a moment's hesitation, I urged the mare forward, and in a minute we were in the midst of the stream. It was a case of life or death! The water came down like a torrent—its tide was irresistible. There was not a moment to be lost. My own life was at stake. With the instinctive feeling of self-preservation, I drove the animal swiftly through the dense body of water, and in a few seconds we had gained the opposite bank of the river. We were safe, but the opportunity of ridding myself of my companion was rendered, by the emergency of the case, unavailable.

I know not how it was, but I suddenly became actuated by a new impulse. Wretch though he was, he had intrusted his safety, his life, into my hands. There was, perhaps, still some good in the man; by enabling him to escape, I might be the instrument of his eternal salvation. He had done me no injury, and at some period of his life he might have rendered good offices to others. I pitied his situation, and determined to render him what assistance I could. I applied the whip to the mare. In a moment she seemed to be endowed with supernatural energy and swiftness. Though he was a murderer—though he was henceforth to be driven from society as an outcast, he should not be deserted in his present emergency. On, on we sped; hedges, trees, houses were passed in rapid succession. Nothing impeded our way. We had a task to perform—a duty to fulfill; dangers and difficulties fled before us. A human life depended upon our exertions, and every nerve required to be strained for its preservation. On, on we hurried. My enthusiasm assumed the appearance of madness. I shouted to the mare till I was hoarse, and broke the whip in several places. Although we comparatively flew over the ground, I fancied we did not go fast enough. My body was in constant motion, as though it would give an impetus to our movements. My companion appeared conscious of my intentions, and, for the first time, evinced an interest in our progress. He drew out his handkerchief, and used it incessantly as an incentive to swiftness. Onward we fled. We were all actuated by the same motive. This concentration of energy gave force and vitality to our actions.

The night had hitherto been calm, but the rain now began to descend in torrents, and at intervals we heard distant peals of thunder. Still we progressed; we were not to be baffled, not to be deterred; we would yet defy pursuit. Large tracts of country were passed over with amazing rapidity. Objects, that at one moment

were at a great distance, in another were reached, and in the next left far behind. Thus we sped forward—thus we seemed to annihilate space altogether. We were endowed with superhuman energies—hurried on by an impulse, involuntary and irresistible. My companion became violent, and appeared to think we did not travel quick enough. He rose once or twice from his seat, and attempted to take the remnant of the whip from my hand, but I resisted, and prevailed upon him to remain quiet.

How long we were occupied in this mad and daring flight, I can not even conjecture. We reached, at length, our destination; but, alas! we had no sooner done so, than the invaluable animal that had conveyed us thither dropped down dead!

My companion and I alighted. I walked up to where the poor animal lay, and was busy deploring her fate, when I heard a struggle at a short distance. I turned quickly round, and beheld the mysterious being with whom I had ridden so fatal a journey, in the custody of two powerful looking men.

"Ha, ha! I thought he would make for this here place," said one of them. "He still has a hankering after his mother's grave. When he got away before, we nabbed him here."

The mystery was soon cleared up. The gentleman had escaped from a lunatic asylum, and was both deaf and dumb. The death of his mother, a few years before, had caused the mental aberration.

The horrors of the night are impressed as vividly upon my memory as though they had just occurred. The expenses of the journey were all defrayed, and I was presented with a handsome gratuity. I never ceased, however, to regret the loss of the favorite mare.

{From the Dublin University Magazine.}

A NIGHT IN THE BELL INN.

THOUGH few men are themselves on visiting terms with their ancestors, most are furnished with one or two decently-authenticated ghost stories. I myself am a firm believer in spectral phenomena, for reasons which I may, perhaps, be tempted to give to the public whenever the custom of printing in folio shall have been happily revived; meanwhile, as they will not bear compression, I keep them by me, and content myself with now and then stating a fact leaving the theory to suggest itself.

Now it has always appeared to me that the

apostles of spectres (if the phrase will be allowed me) have, like other men with a mission, been, perhaps, a little precipitate in assuming their facts, and sometimes find "true ghosts" upon evidence much too slender to satisfy the hard-hearted and unbelieving generation we live in. They have thus brought scandal not only upon the useful class to which they belong, but upon the world of spirits itself—causing ghosts to be so generally discredited, that fifty visits made in their usual private and confidential way, will now hardly make a single convert beyond the individual favored with the interview; and, in order to reinstate themselves in their former position, they will be obliged henceforward to appear at noon-day, and in places of public resort.

The reader will perceive, then, that I am convinced of the equal impolicy and impropriety of resting the claims of my clients (ghosts in general) upon facts which will not stand the test of an impartial, and even a skeptical scrutiny. And, perhaps, I can not give a happier illustration of the temper of my philosophy, at once candid and cautious, than is afforded by the following relation, for every tittle of which I solemnly pledge my character at once as a gentleman and as a metaphysician.

There is a very agreeable book by Mrs. Crowe, entitled "The Night Side of Nature," and which among a *dubia cana* of authentic tales of terror, contains several which go to show the very trivial causes which have from time to time caused the reappearance of departed spirits in this grosser world. A certain German professor, who, for instance, actually *persecuted* an old college friend with preternatural visitations for no other purpose, as it turned out, than to procure a settlement of some small six-and-eightpenny accounts, which he owed among his trades-people at the time of his death. I could multiply, from my own notes, cases still odder, in which sensible and rather indolent men, too, have been at the trouble to re-cross the awful interval between us and the invisible, for purposes apparently still less important—so trivial, indeed, that for the present I had rather not mention them, lest I should expose their memories to the ridicule of the unreflecting. I shall now proceed to my narrative, with the repeated assurance, that the reader will nowhere find in it a single syllable that is not most accurately and positively true.

About four-and-thirty years ago I was travelling through Denbighshire upon a mission which needed dispatch. I had, in fact, in my charge, some papers which were required for the legal preliminaries to a marriage, which was about to take place in a family of consideration, upon the borders of that county.

The season was winter, but the weather delightful—that is to say, clear and frosty; and, even without foliage, the country through which I posted was beautiful. The subject of my journey was a pleasant one. I anticipated an agreeable visit, and a cordial welcome; and the

weather and scenery were precisely of the sort to second the cheerful associations with which my excursion had been undertaken. Let no one, therefore, suggest that I was predisposed for the reception of gloomy or horrible impressions. When the sun set we had a splendid moon, at once soft and brilliant; and I pleased myself with watching the altered, and, if possible, more beautiful effects of the scenery through which we were smoothly rolling. I was to put up for the night at the little town of —; and on reaching the hill—over which the approach to it is conducted, about a short mile from its quaint little street—I dismounted, and directing the postillion to walk his jaded horses leisurely up the winding road, I trod on before him in the pleasant moonlight, and sharp, bracing air. A little by-path led directly up the steep acclivity, while the carriage-road more gradually ascended by a wide sweep—this little path, leading through fields and hedgerows, I followed, intending to anticipate the arrival of my conveyance at the summit of the hill.

I had not proceeded very far when I found myself close to a pretty old church, whose ivied tower, and countless diamond window panes, were glittering in the moonbeams—a high, irregular hedge, overtopped by tall and ancient trees inclosed it; and rows of funereal yews showed black and mournful among the wan array of headstones that kept watch over the village dead. I was so struck with the glimpse I had caught of the old church-yard, that I could not forbear mounting the little stile that commanded it—no scene could be imagined more still and solitary. Not a human habitation was near—every sign and sound of life was reverently remote; and this old church, with its silent congregation of the dead marshaled under its walls, seemed to have spread round it a circle of stillness and desertion that pleased, while it thrilled me.

No sound was here audible but the softened rush of waters, and that sweet note of home and safety, the distant baying of the watch-dog, now and then broken by the sharper rattle of the carriage-wheels upon the dry road. But while I looked upon the sad and solemn scene before me, these sounds were interrupted by one which startled, and, indeed, for a moment, froze me with horror. The sound was a cry, or rather a howl of despairing terror, such as I have never heard before or since uttered by human voice. It broke from the stillness of the church-yard; but I saw no figure from which it proceeded—though this circumstance, indeed, was scarcely wonderful, as the broken ground, the trees, tall weeds, and tomb-stones afforded abundant cover for any person who might have sought concealment. This cry of unspeakable agony was succeeded by a silence; and, I confess, my heart throbbed strangely, when the same voice articulated, in the same tone of agony,

"Why will you trouble the dead? Who can torment us before the time? I will come

to you in my flesh, though after my skin worms destroy this body—and you shall speak to me, face to face."

This strange address was followed by another cry of despair, which died away as suddenly as it was raised.

I never could tell why it was I was not more horror-stricken than I really was by this mysterious, and, all things considered, even terrible interpellation. It was not until the silence had again returned, and the faint rustling of the frosty breeze among the crisp weeds crept toward me like the stealthy approach of some unearthly influence, that I felt a superstitious terror gradually inspire me, which hurried me at an accelerated pace from the place. A few minutes, and I heard the friendly voice of my charioteer hallooing to me from the summit of the hill.

Reassured, as I approached him, I abated my speed.

"I saw you standing on the stile, sir, by the church-yard," he said, as I drew near, "and I ask your pardon for not giving you the hint before, but they say it is not lucky; and I called to you loud and lusty to come away, sir; but I see you are nothing the worse of it."

"Why, what is there to be afraid of there, my good fellow?" I asked, affecting as much indifference as I was able.

"Why, sir," said the man, throwing an uneasy look in the direction, "they do say there's a bad spirit haunts it; and nobody in these parts would go near it after dark for love or money."

"Haunted!" I repeated; "and how does the spirit show himself?" I asked.

"Oh! lawk, sir, in all sorts of shapes—sometimes like an old woman almost doubled in two with years," he answered, "sometimes like a little child agoing along a full foot high above the grass of the graves; and sometimes like a big black ram, strutting on his hind legs, and with a pair of eyes like live coals; and some have seen him in the shape of a man, with his arm raised up toward the sky, and his head hanging down, as if his neck was broke. I can't think of half the shapes he has took at different times; but they're all bad: the very child, they say, when he comes in that shape, has the face of Satan—God bless us! and nobody's ever the same again that sees him once."

By this time I was again seated in my vehicle, and some six or eight minutes' quick driving whirled us into the old-fashioned street, and brought the chaise to a full stop before the open door and well-lighted hall of the Bell Inn. To me there has always been an air of indescribable cheer and comfort about a substantial country hostelry, especially when one arrives, as I did, upon a keen winter's night, with an appetite as sharp, and something of that sense of adventure and excitement which, before the days of down-trains and tickets, always in a greater or less degree, gave a zest to travel-

ing. Greeted with that warmest of welcomes for which inns, alas! are celebrated, I had soon satisfied the importunities of a keen appetite; and having for some hours taken mine ease in a comfortable parlor before a blazing fire, I began to feel sleepy, and betook myself to my no less comfortable bed-chamber.

It is not to be supposed that the adventure of the church-yard had been obliterated from my recollection by the suppressed bustle and good cheer of the "Bell." On the contrary, it had occupied me almost incessantly during my solitary ruminations; and as the night advanced, and the stillness of repose and desertion stole over the old mansion, the sensations with which this train of remembrance and speculation was accompanied became any thing but purely pleasant.

I felt, I confess, fidgety and queer—I searched the corners and recesses of the oddly-shaped and roomy old apartment—I turned the face of the looking-glass to the wall—I poked the fire into a roaring blaze—I looked behind the window-curtains, with a vague anxiety, to assure myself that nothing could be lurking there. The shutter was a little open, and the ivied tower of the little church, and the tufted tops of the trees that surrounded it, were visible over the slope of the intervening hill. I hastily shut out the unwelcome object, and in a mood of mind, I must confess, favorable enough to any freak my nerves might please to play me, I hurried through my dispositions for the night, humming a gay air all the time, to re-assure myself, and plunged into bed, extinguishing the candle, and—shall I acknowledge the weakness? nearly burying my head under the blankets.

I lay awake some time, as men will do under such circumstances, but at length fatigue overcame me, and I fell into a profound sleep. From this repose I was, however, aroused in the manner I am about to describe. A very considerable interval must have intervened. There was a cold air in the room very unlike the comfortable atmosphere in which I had composed myself to sleep. The fire, though much lower than when I had gone to bed, was still emitting flame enough to throw a flickering light over the chamber. My curtains were, however, closely drawn, and I could not see beyond the narrow tent in which I lay.

There had been as I awaked a clanking among the fire-irons, as if a palsied hand was striving to arrange the fire, and this rather unaccountable noise continued for some seconds after I had become completely awake.

Under the impression that I was subjected to an accidental intrusion, I called out, first in a gentle and afterward in a sharper tone,

"Who's there?"

At the second summons the sound ceased, and I heard instead the tread of naked feet, as it seemed to me, upon the floor, pacing to and fro, between the hearth and the bed in which I lay. A superstitious terror, which I could

not combat, stole over me; with an effort I repeated my question, and drawing myself upright in the bed, expected the answer with a strange sort of trepidation. It came in terms and accompanied with accessories which I shall not soon forget.

The very same tones which had so startled me in the church-yard the evening before, the very sounds which I had heard then and there, were now filling my ears, and spoken in the chamber where I lay.

"Why will you trouble the dead? Who can torment us before the time? I will come to you in my flesh, 'though after my skin worms destroy this body,' and you shall speak with me face to face."

As I live, I can swear the words and the voice were the very same I had heard on the occasion I have mentioned, but (and mark this) repeated to no one. With feelings which I shall not attempt to describe, I heard the speaker approach the bed—a hand parted the bed-curtains and drew them open, revealing a form more horrible than my fancy had ever seen—an almost gigantic figure—naked, except for what might well have been the rotten remnant of a shroud—stood close beside my bed—livid and cadaverous—grimaced as it seemed with the dust of the grave, and staring on me with a gaze of despair, malignity, and fury, too intense almost for human endurance.

I can not say whether I spoke or not, but this infernal spectre answered me as if I had.

"I am dead and yet alive," it said, "the child of perdition—in the grave I am a murderer, but here I am APOLLYON. Fall down and worship me."

Having thus spoken, it stood for a moment at the bedside, and then turned away with a shuddering moan, and I lost sight of it, but after a few seconds it came again to the bedside as before.

"When I died they put me under Mervyn's tombstone, and they did not bury me. My feet lie toward the west—turn them to the east and I will rest—maybe I will rest—I will rest—rest—rest."

Again the figure was gone, and once again it returned, and said,

"I am your master—I am your resurrection and your life, and therefore, fall down and worship me."

It made a motion to mount upon the bed, but what further passed I know not, for I fainted.

I must have lain in this state for a long time, for when I became conscious the fire was almost extinct. For hours that seemed interminable I lay, scarcely daring to breathe, and afraid to get up lest I should encounter the hideous apparition, for aught I knew, lurking close beside me. I lay, therefore, in an agony of expectation such as I will not attempt to describe, awaiting the appearance of the daylight.

Gradually it came, and with it the cheerful and reassuring sounds of life and occupation. At length I mustered courage to reach the bell-

rope, and having rung lustily, I plunged again into bed.

"Draw the window-curtains—open the shutters," I exclaimed as the man entered, and, these orders executed, "look about the room," I added, "and see whether a cat or any other animal has got in."

There was nothing of the sort; and satisfied that my visitant was no longer in the chamber, I dismissed the man, and hurried through my toilet with breathless precipitation.

Hastening from the hated scene of my terrors, I escaped to the parlor, whither I instantly summoned the proprietor of "the Bell" in *propria persona*. I suppose I looked scared and haggard enough, for mine host looked upon me with an expression of surprise and inquiry.

"Shut the door," said I.

It was done.

"I have had an uneasy night in the room you assigned me, sir; I may say indeed, a *miserable* night," I said.

"Pray," resumed I, interrupting his apologetic expressions of surprise, "has any person but myself ever complained of—of being *disturbed* in that room?"

"Never," he assured me.

I had suspected the ghastly old practical joke, so often played off by landlords in story-books, and fancied I might have been deliberately exposed to the chances of a "haunted chamber." But there was no acting in the frank look and honest denial of mine host.

"It is a very strange thing," said I hesitating; and "I do not see why I should not tell you what has occurred. And as I could swear, if necessary, to the perfect reality of the entire scene, it behoves you, I think, to sift the matter carefully. For myself, I can not entertain a doubt as to the nature of the truly terrible visitation to which I have been subjected; and, were I in your position, I should transfer my establishment at once to some other house as well suited to the purpose, and free from the dreadful liabilities of this.

I proceeded to detail the particulars of the occurrence of the past night, to which he listened with nearly as much horror as I recited them with.

"Mervyn's tomb!" he repeated after me; why that's down there in L——r: the church-yard you can see from the window of the room you slept in."

"Let us go there instantly," I exclaimed, with an almost feverish anxiety to ascertain whether we should discover in the place indicated any thing corroborative of the authenticity of my vision.

"Well, I shan't say no," said he, obviously bracing himself for an effort of courage; "but we'll take Fankes, and James the helper, with us; and please, sir, you'll not mention the circumstance as has occurred to either on 'em."

I gave him the assurance he asked for, and in a few minutes our little party were in full march upon the point of interest.

There had been an intense black frost, and the ground, reverberating to our tread with the hollow sound of a vault, emitted the only noise that accompanied our rapid advance. I and my host were too much preoccupied for conversation, and our attendants maintained a respectful silence. A few minutes brought us to the low, gray walls and bleak hedgerows that surrounded the pretty old church, and all its melancholy and picturesque memorials.

"Mervyn's tomb lies there, I think, sir," he said, pointing to a corner of the church-yard, in which piles of rubbish, withered weeds, and brambles were thickly accumulated under the solemn, though imperfect shelter of the wintry trees.

He exchanged some sentences with our attendants in Welsh.

"Yes, sir, that's the place," he added, turning to me.

And as we all approached it, I bethought me that the direction in which, as I stood upon the stile, I had heard the voice on the night preceding, corresponded accurately with that indicated by my guides. The tomb in question was a huge slab of black marble, supported, as was made apparent when the surrounding brambles were removed, upon six pillars, little more than two feet high each. There was ample room for a human body to lie inside this funeral pent-house; and, on stooping to look beneath, I was unspeakably shocked to see that something like a human figure was actually extended there.

It was, indeed, a corpse, and, what is more, corresponded in every trait with the infernal phantom which, on the preceding night, had visited and appalled me.

The body, though miserably emaciated, was that of a large-boned, athletic man, of fully six feet four in height; and it was, therefore, no easy task to withdraw it from the receptacle where it had been deposited, and lay it, as our assistants did, upon the tombstone which had covered it. Strange to say, moreover, the feet of the body, as we found it, had been placed toward the west.

As I looked upon this corpse, and recognized, but too surely, in its proportions and lineaments, every trait of the apparition that had stood at my bed-side, with a countenance animated by the despair and malignity of the damned, my heart fluttered and sank within me, and I recoiled from the effigy of the demon with terror, second only to that which had thrilled me on the night preceding.

Now, reader—*honest* reader—I appeal to your own appreciation of testimony, and ask you, having these facts in evidence, and upon the deposition of an eye and ear witness, whose veracity, through a long life, has never once been compromised or questioned, have you, or have you not, in the foregoing story, a well-authenticated ghost story?

Before you answer the above question, however, it may be convenient to let you know cer-

tain other facts which were clearly established upon the inquest that was very properly held upon the body which in so strange a manner we had discovered.

I purposely avoid details, and without assigning the depositions respectively to the witnesses who made them, shall restrict myself to a naked outline of the evidence as it appeared.

The body I have described was identified as that of Abraham Smith, an unfortunate lunatic, who had, upon the day but one preceding, made his escape from the neighboring parish work-house, where he had been for many years confined. His hallucination was a strange, but not by any means an unprecedented one. He fancied that he had died, and was condemned; and, as these ideas alternately predominated, sometimes spoke of himself as an "evil spirit," and sometimes importuned his keepers to "bury him;" using habitually certain phrases, which I had no difficulty in recognizing as among those which he had addressed to me. He had been traced to the neighborhood where his body was found, and had been seen and relieved scarcely half a mile from it, about two hours before my visit to the church-yard! There were, further, unmistakable evidences of some person's having climbed up the trellis-work to my window on the previous night, the shutter of which had been left unbarred, and, as the window might have been easily opened with a push, the cold which I experienced, as an accompaniment of the nocturnal visit, was easily accounted for. There was a mark of blood upon the window-stool, and a scrape upon the knee of the body corresponded with it. A multiplicity of other slight circumstances, and the positive assertion of the chamber-maid that the window had been opened, and was but imperfectly closed again, came in support of the conclusion, which was to my mind satisfactorily settled by the concurrent evidence of the medical men, to the effect that the unhappy man could not have been many hours dead when the body was found.

Taken in the mass, the evidence convinced me; and though I might still have clung to the preternatural theory, which, in the opinion of some persons, the facts of the case might still have sustained, I candidly decided with the weight of evidence, "gave up the ghost," and accepted the natural, but still somewhat horrible explanation of the occurrence. For this candor I take credit to myself. I might have stopped short at the discovery of the corpse, but I am no friend to "spurious gospels;" let our faith, whatever it is, be founded in honest fact. For my part, I steadfastly believe in ghosts, and have dozens of stories to support that belief; but this is not among them. Should I ever come, therefore, to tell you one, pray remember that you have to deal with a candid narrator.

VOL. I.—No. 2.—R

A TRUE GHOST STORY.

"DID you ever hear," said a friend once to me, "a real true ghost story, one you might depend upon?"

"There are not many such to be heard," I replied, "and I am afraid it has never been my good fortune to meet with those who were really able to give me a genuine, well-authenticated story."

"Well, you shall never have cause to say so again; and as it was an adventure that happened to myself, you can scarcely think it other than well authenticated. I know you to be no coward, or I might hesitate before I told it to you. You need not stir the fire; there is plenty of light by which you can hear it. And now to begin. I had been riding hard one day in the autumn for nearly five or six hours, through some of the most tempestuous weather to which it had ever been my ill luck to be exposed. It was just about the time of the Equinox, and perfect hurricanes swept over the hills, as if every wind in heaven had broken loose, and had gone mad, and on every hill the rain and driving sleet poured down in one unbroken shower.

"When I reached the head of Wentford valley—you know the place, a narrow ravine with rocks on one side, and those rich full woods (not that they were very full then, for the winds had shaken them till there was scarcely a leaf on their bare rustling branches) on the other, with a clear little stream winding through the hollow dell—when I came to the entrance of this valley, weather-beaten veteran as I was, I scarcely knew how to hold on my way; the wind, as it were, held in between the two high banks, rushed like a river just broken loose into

a new course, carrying with it a perfect sheet of ruin, against which my poor horse and I struggled with considerable difficulty: still I went on, for the village lay at the other end, and I had a patient to see there, who had sent a very urgent message, entreating me to come to him as soon as possible. We are slaves to a message, we poor medical men, and I urged on my poor jaded brute with a keen relish for the warm fire and good dinner that awaited me as soon as I could see my unfortunate patient, and get back to a home doubly valued on such a day as that in which I was then out. It was indeed dreary riding in such weather; and the scene altogether, through which I passed, was certainly not the most conducive toward raising a man's spirits; but I positively half wished myself out in it all again, rather than sit the hour I was obliged to spend by the sick-bed of the wretched man I had been summoned to visit. He had met with an accident the day before, and as he had been drinking up to the time, and the people had delayed sending for me, I found him in a frightful state of fever; and it was really an awful thing either to look at or to hear him. He was delirious, and perfectly furious; and his face, swelled with passion, and crimson with the fever that was burning him up, was a sight to frighten children, and not one calculated to add to the tranquillity even of full-grown men. I dare say you think me very weak, and that I ought to have been inured to such things, minding his ravings no more than the dash of the rain against the window; but, during the whole of my practice, I had never seen man or woman, in health or in fever, in so frightful a state of furious frenzy, with the impress of every bad passion stamped so broadly and fearfully upon the face; and, in the miserable hovel that then held me with his old witch-like mother standing by, the babel of the wind and rain outside added to the ravings of the wretched creature within. I began to feel neither in a happy nor an enviable frame of mind. There is nothing so frightful as where the reasonable spirit seems to abandon man's body, and leave it to a fiend instead.

"After an hour or more waiting patiently by his bedside, not liking to leave the helpless old woman alone with so dangerous a companion (for I could not answer for any thing he might do in his frenzy), I thought that the remedies by which I hoped in some measure to subdue the fever, seemed beginning to take effect, and that I might leave him, promising to send all that was necessary, though fearing much that he had gone beyond all my power to restore him; and desiring that I might immediately be called back again, should he get worse instead of better, which I felt almost certain would be the case, I hastened homeward, glad enough to be leaving wretched huts and raving men, driving rain and windy hills, for a comfortable house, dry clothes, a warm fire, and a good dinner. I think I never saw such a fire in my life as the one that blazed up my chimney; it looked so

wonderfully warm and bright, and there seemed an indescribable air of comfort about the room which I had never noticed before. One would have thought I should have enjoyed it all intensely after my wet ride, but throughout the whole evening, the scenes of the day would keep recurring to my mind with most uncomfortable distinctness, and it was in vain that I endeavored to forget it all in a book, one of my old favorites too; so at last I fairly gave up the attempt, as the hideous face would come continually between my eyes and an especially good passage; and I went off to bed heartily tired, and expecting sleep very readily to visit me. Nor was I disappointed: I was soon deep asleep, though my last thought was on the little valley I had left. How long this heavy and dreamless sleep continued, I can not tell, but gradually I felt consciousness returning, in the shape of the very thoughts with which I fell asleep, and at last I opened my eyes, thoroughly roused by a heavy blow at my window. I can not describe my horror, when, by the light of a moon struggling among the heavy surge-like clouds, I saw the very face, the face of that man looking in at me through the casement, the eyes distended and the face pressed close to the glass. I started up in bed, to convince myself that I really was awake, and not suffering from some frightful dream; there it staid, perfectly moveless, its wide ghastly eyes fixed unwaveringly on mine, which, by a kind of fascination, became equally fixed and rigid, gazing upon the dreadful face, which alone without a body was visible at the window, upless an indefinable black shadow, that seemed to float beyond it, might be fancied into one. I can scarcely tell how long I so sat looking at it, but I remember something of a rushing sound, a feeling of relief, a falling exhausted back upon my pillow, and then I awoke in the morning ill and unrefreshed. I was ill at ease, and the first question I asked, on coming down stairs, was, whether any messenger had come to summon me to Wentford. A messenger had come, they told me, but it was to say I need trouble myself no further, as the man was already beyond all aid, having died about the middle of the night. I never felt so strangely in my life as when they told me this, and my brain almost reeled as the events of the previous day and night passed through my mind in rapid succession. That I had seen something supernatural in the darkness of the night, I had never doubted, but when the sun shone brightly into my room in the morning, through the same window, where I had seen so frightful and strange a sight by the spectral light of the moon, I began to believe more it was a dream, and endeavored to ridicule myself out of all uncomfortable feelings, which, nevertheless, I could not quite shake off. Haunted by what I considered a painful dream, I left my room, and the first thing I heard was a confirmation of what I had been for the last hour endeavoring to reason and ridicule myself out of believing. It was some hours before I could recover my ordinary tranquillity; and then it came back, not slowly as you might have expected, as the impression gradually wore off, and time wrought his usual changes in mind as in body, but suddenly—by the discovery that our large white owl had escaped during the night, and had honored my window with a visit before he became quite accustomed to his liberty."

[From Household Words.]

GHOST STORIES—AN INCIDENT IN THE LIFE OF MADLLE CLAIRON.

THE occurrence related in the letter which we are about to quote, is a remarkable instance of those apparently supernatural visitations which it has been found so difficult (if not impossible) to explain and account for. It does not appear to have been known to Scott, Brewster, or any other English writer who has collected and endeavored to expound those ghostly phenomena.

Clairon was the greatest tragedian that ever appeared on the French stage; holding on it a supremacy similar to that of Siddons on our own. She was a woman of powerful intellect, and had the merit of affecting a complete revolution in the French school of tragic acting; substituted an easy, varied and natural delivery for the stilted and monotonous declamation which had till then prevailed, and being the first to consult classic taste and propriety of costume. Her mind was cultivated by habits of intimacy with the most distinguished men of her day; and she was one of the most brilliant ornaments of those literary circles which the contemporary memoir writers describe in such glowing colors. In an age of corruption, unparalleled in modern times, Mademoiselle Clairon was not proof against the temptations to which her position exposed her. But a lofty spirit, and some religious principles, which she retained amidst a generation of infidels and scoffers, saved her from degrading vices, and enabled her to spend an old age protracted beyond the usual period of human life, in respectability and honor.

She died in 1803, at the age of eighty. She was nearly seventy when the following letter was written. It was addressed to M. Henri Meister, a man of some eminence among the literati of that period; the associate of Diderot, Grimm, D'Holbach, M. and Madame Necker, &c., and the *collaborateur* of Grimm in his famous "Correspondence." This gentleman was Clairon's "literary executor;" having been intrusted with her memoirs, written by herself, and published after her death.

With this preface we give Mademoiselle Clairon's narrative, written in her old age, of an occurrence which had taken place half a century before.

"In 1743, my youth, and my success on the stage, had drawn round me a good many admirers. M. de S——, the son of a merchant in Brittany, about thirty years old, handsome, and possessed of considerable talent, was one of those who were most strongly attached to me. His conversation and manners were those of a man of education and good society, and the reserve and timidity which distinguished his attention made a favorable impression on me. After a green-room acquaintance of some time I permitted him to visit me at my house, but a better knowledge of his situation and character was

not to his advantage. Ashamed of being only a *bourgeois*, he was squandering his fortune at Paris under an assumed title. His temper was severe and gloomy: he knew mankind too well, he said, not to despise and avoid them. He wished to see no one but me, and desired from me, in return, a similar sacrifice of the world. I saw, from this time, the necessity, for his own sake as well as mine, of destroying his hopes by reducing our intercourse to terms of less intimacy. My behavior brought upon him a violent illness, during which I showed him every mark of friendly interest, but firmly refused to deviate from the course I had adopted. My steadiness only deepened his wound; and unhappily, at this time, a treacherous relative, to whom he had intrusted the management of his affairs, took advantage of his helpless condition by robbing him, and leaving him so destitute that he was obliged to accept the little money I had, for his subsistence, and the attendance which his condition required. You must feel, my dear friend, the importance of never revealing this secret. I respect his memory, and I would not expose him to the insulting pity of the world. Preserve, then, the religious silence which after many years I now break for the first time.

"At length he recovered his property, but never his health; and thinking I was doing him a service by keeping him at a distance from me, I constantly refused to receive either his letters or his visits.

"Two years and a half elapsed between this period and that of his death. He sent to beg me to see him once more in his last moments, but I thought it necessary not to comply with his wish. He died, having with him only his domestics, and an old lady, his sole companion for a long time. He lodged at that time on the Rempart, near the Chaussée d'Antin; I resided in the Rue de Bussy, near the Abbaye St. Germain. My mother lived with me; and that night we had a little party to supper. We were very gay, and I was singing a lively air, when the clock struck eleven, and the sound was succeeded by a long and piercing cry of unearthly horror. The company looked aghast; I fainted, and remained for a quarter of an hour totally insensible. We then began to reason about the nature of so frightful a sound, and it was agreed to set a watch in the street in case it were repeated.

"It was repeated very often. All our servants, my friends, my neighbors, even the police, heard the same cry, always at the same hour, always proceeding from under my windows, and appearing to come from the empty air. I could not doubt that it was meant entirely for me. I rarely supped abroad; but the nights I did so, nothing was heard; and several times, when I came home, and was asking my mother and servants if they had heard any thing, it suddenly burst forth, as if in the midst of us. One night, the President de B——, at whose house I had supped, desired to see me safe home. While he was bidding me 'good night' at my door, the

cry broke out seemingly from something between him and me. He, like all Paris, was aware of the story; but he was so horrified, that his servants lifted him into his carriage more dead than alive.

"Another time, I asked my comrade Rosely to accompany me to the Rue St. Honoré to choose some stuffs, and then to pay a visit to Mademoiselle de St. P——, who lived near the Porte Saint-Denis. My ghost story (as it was called) was the subject of our whole conversation. This intelligent young man was struck by my adventure, though he did not believe there was any thing supernatural in it. He pressed me to evoke the phantom, promising to believe if it answered my call. With weak audacity I complied, and suddenly the cry was heard three times with fearful loudness and rapidity. When we arrived at our friend's door both of us were found senseless in the carriage.

"After this scene, I remained for some months without hearing any thing. I thought it was all over; but I was mistaken.

"All the public performances had been transferred to Versailles on account of the marriage of the Dauphin. We were to pass three days there, but sufficient lodgings were not provided for us. Madame Grandval had no apartment; and I offered to share with her the room with two beds which had been assigned to me in the avenue of St. Cloud. I gave her one of the beds and took the other. While my maid was undressing to lie down beside me, I said to her, 'We are at the world's end here, and it is dreadful weather; the cry would be somewhat puzzled to get at us.' In a moment it rang through the room. Madame Grandval ran in her night-dress from top to bottom of the house, in which nobody closed an eye for the rest of the night. This, however, was the last time the cry was heard.

"Seven or eight days afterward, while I was chatting with my usual evening circle, the sound of the clock striking eleven was followed by the report of a gun fired at one of the windows. We all heard the noise, we all saw the fire, yet the window was undamaged. We concluded that some one sought my life, and that it was necessary to take precautions again another attempt. The Intendant des Menus Plaisirs, who was present, flew to the house of his friend, M. de Marville, the Lieutenant of Police. The houses opposite mine were instantly searched, and for several days were guarded from top to bottom. My house was closely examined; the street was filled with spies in all possible disguises. But, notwithstanding all this vigilance, the same explosion was heard and seen for three whole months always at the same hour, and at the same window-pane, without any one being able to discover from whence it proceeded. This fact stands recorded in the registers of the police.

"Nothing was heard for some days; but having been invited by Mademoiselle Dumesnil* to join a little evening party at her house near the

Barrière blanche, I got into a hackney-coach at eleven o'clock with my maid. It was clear moonlight as we passed along the Boulevards, which were then beginning to be studded with houses. While we were looking at the half-finished buildings, my maid said, 'Was it not in this neighborhood that M. de S—— died?' 'From what I have heard,' I answered, 'I think it should be there'—pointing with my finger to a house before us. From that house came the same gunshot that I had heard before. It seemed to traverse our carriage, and the coachman set off at full speed, thinking we were attacked by robbers. We arrived at Mademoiselle Dumesnil's in a state of the utmost terror; a feeling I did not get rid of for a long time."

[Mademoiselle Clairon gives some further details similar to the above, and adds that the noises finally ceased in about two years and a half. After this, intending to change her residence, she put up a bill on the house she was leaving; and many people made the pretext of looking at the apartments an excuse for gratifying their curiosity to see, in her every-day guise, the great tragedian of the Théâtre Français.]

"One day I was told that an old lady desired to see my rooms. Having always had a great respect for the aged, I went down to receive her. An unaccountable emotion seized me on seeing her, and I perceived that she was moved in a similar manner. I begged her to sit down, and we were both silent for some time. At length she spoke, and, after some preparation, came to the subject of her visit.

"I was, mademoiselle, the best friend of M. de S——, and the only friend whom he would see during the last year of his life. We spoke of you incessantly; I urging him to forget you,—he protesting that he would love you beyond the tomb. Your eyes which are full of tears allow me to ask you why you made him so wretched; and how, with such a mind and such feelings as yours, you could refuse him the consolation of once more seeing and speaking to you?"

"We can not," I answered, "command our sentiments. M. de S—— had merit and estimable qualities; but his gloomy, bitter, and overbearing temper made me equally afraid of his company, his friendship, and his love. To make him happy, I must have renounced all intercourse with society, and even the exercise of my talents. I was poor and proud; I desire, and hope I shall ever desire, to owe nothing to any one but myself. My friendship for him prompted me to use every endeavor to lead him to more just and reasonable sentiments; failing in this, and persuaded that his obstinacy proceeded less from the excess of his passion than from the violence of his character, I took the firm resolution to separate from him entirely. I refused to see him in his last moments, because the sight would have rent my heart; because I feared to appear too barbarous if I remained inflexible, and to make myself wretched if I yielded. Such, madame, are the motives of my conduct—motives for which, I think, no one can blame me."

* The celebrated tragedian.

"'It would indeed,' said the lady, 'be unjust to condemn you. My poor friend himself in his reasonable moments acknowledged all that he owed you. But his passion and his malady overcame him, and your refusal to see him hastened his last moments. He was counting the minutes, when at half-past ten, his servant came to tell him that decidedly you would not come. After a moment's silence, he took me by the hand with a frightful expression of despair. Barbarous woman! he cried; but she will gain nothing by her cruelty. As I have followed her in life, I shall follow her in death! I endeavored to calm him; he was dead.'

"I need scarcely tell you, my dear friend, what effect these last words had upon me. Their analogy to all my apparitions filled me with terror, but time and reflection calmed my feelings. The consideration that I was neither the better nor the worse for all that had happened to me, has led me to ascribe it all to chance. I do not, indeed, know what *chance* is; but it can not be denied that the something which goes by that name has a great influence on all that passes in the world.

"Such is my story; do with it what you will. If you intend to make it public, I beg you to suppress the initial letter of the name, and the name of the province."

This last injunction was not, as we see, strictly complied with; but, at the distance of half a century, the suppression of a name was probably of little consequence.

There is no reason to doubt the entire truth of Mademoiselle Clairon's narrative. The incidents which she relates made such a deep and enduring impression on her mind, that it remained uneffaced during the whole course of her brilliant career, and, almost at the close of a long life spent in the bustle and business of the world, inspired her with solemn and religious thoughts. Those incidents can scarcely be ascribed to delusions of her imagination; for she had a strong and cultivated mind, not likely to be influenced by superstitious credulity; and besides, the mysterious sounds were heard by others as well as herself, and had become the subject of general conversation in Paris. The suspicion of a trick or conspiracy never seems to have occurred to her, though such a supposition is the only way in which the circumstances can be explained; and we are convinced that this explanation, though not quite satisfactory in every particular, is the real one. Several portentous occurrences, equally or more marvelous, have thus been accounted for.

Our readers remember the history of the Commissioners of the Roundhead Parliament for the sequestration of the royal domains, who were terrified to death, and at last fairly driven out of the Palace of Woodstock, by a series of diabolical sounds and sights, which were long afterward discovered to be the work of one of their own servants, Joe Tomkins by name, a loyalist in the disguise of a puritan. The famous "Cook-

lane Ghost," which kept the town in agitation for months, and baffled the penetration of multitudes of the divines, philosophers, and literati of the day, was a young girl of some eleven or twelve years old, whose mysterious knockings were produced by such simple means, that their remaining so long undetected is the most marvelous part of the story. This child was the agent of a conspiracy formed by her father, with some confederates, to ruin the reputation of a gentleman by means of pretended revelations from the dead. For this conspiracy these persons were tried, and the father, the most guilty party, underwent the punishment of the pillory.

A more recent story is that of the "Stockwell Ghost," which forms the subject of a volume published in 1772, and is shortly told by Mr. Hone in the first volume of his "Every Day Book." Mrs. Golding, an elderly lady residing at Stockwell, in Surrey, had her house disturbed by portents, which not only terrified her and her family, but spread alarm through the vicinity. Strange noises were heard proceeding from empty parts of the house, and heavy articles of furniture, glass, and earthenware, were thrown down and broken in pieces before the eyes of the family and neighbors. Mrs. Golding, driven by terror from her own dwelling, took refuge, first in one neighboring house, and then in another, and thither the prodigies followed her. It was observed that her maid-servant, Ann Robinson, was always present when these things took place, either in Mrs. Golding's own house, or in those of the neighbors. This girl, who had lived only about a week with her mistress, became the subject of mistrust and was dismissed, after which the disturbances entirely ceased. But the matter rested on mere suspicion. "Scarcely any one," says Mr. Hone, "who lived at that time listened patiently to the presumption, or without attributing the whole to witchcraft." At length Mr. Hone himself obtained a solution of the mystery from a gentleman who had become acquainted with Ann Robinson many years after the affair happened, and to whom she had confessed that she alone had produced all these supernatural horrors, by fixing wires or horse-hairs to different articles, according as they were heavy or light, and thus throwing them down, with other devices equally simple, which the terror and confusion of the spectators prevented them from detecting. The girl began these tricks to forward some love affair, and continued them for amusement when she saw the effect they produced.

Remembering these cases, we can have little doubt that Mademoiselle Clairon's maid was the author of the noises which threw her mistress and her friends into such consternation. Her own house was generally the place where these things happened; and on the most remarkable occasions where they happened elsewhere, is expressly mentioned that the maid was present. At St. Cloud it was to the maid, who was her bed-fellow, that Clairon was congratulating herself on being out of the way of the cry, when it suddenly was heard in the very room. She had

her maid in the carriage with her on the Boulevards, and it was immediately after the girl had asked her a question about the death of M. de S—— that the gun-shot was heard, which seemed to traverse the carriage. Had the maid a confederate—perhaps her fellow-servant on the box—to whom she might have given the signal? When Mademoiselle Clairon went a-shopping to the Rue St. Honoré, she probably had her maid with her, either in or outside the carriage; and, indeed, in every instance the noises took place when the maid would most probably have been present, or close at hand. In regard to the unearthly cry, she might easily have produced it herself without any great skill in ventriloquism, or the art of imitating sounds; a supposition which is rendered the more probable, as its realization was rendered the more easy, by the fact of no words having been uttered—merely a wild cry. Most of the common itinerant ventriloquists on our public race-courses can utter speeches for an imaginary person without any perceptible motion of the lips; the utterance of a mere sound in this way would be infinitely less difficult.

The noises resembling the report of fire-arms (very likely to have been unconsciously, and in perfect good faith, exaggerated by the terror of the hearers) may have been produced by a confederate fellow-servant, or a lover. It is to be observed, that the first time this seeming report was heard, the houses opposite were guarded by the police, and spies were placed in the street, but Mademoiselle Clairon's own house was merely "examined." It is evident that these precautions, however effectual against a plot conducted from without, could have no effect whatever against tricks played within her house by one or more of her own servants.

As to the maid-servant's motives for engaging in this series of deceptions, many may have existed and been sufficiently strong; the lightest, which we shall state last, would probably be the strongest. She may have been in communication with M. de S——'s relations for some hidden purpose which never was effected. How far this circumstance may be connected with the date of the first portent, the very night of the young man's death, or whether that coincidence was simply accidental, is matter for conjecture. The old lady, his relative, who afterward visited Clairon, and told her a tale calculated to fill her with superstitious dread, may herself have been the maid-servant's employer for some similar purpose; or (which is at least equally probable) the tale may have had nothing whatever to do with the sound, and may have been perfectly true. But all experience in such cases assures us that the love of mischief, or the love of power, and the desire of being important, would be sufficient motives to the maid for such a deception. The more frightened Clairon was, the more necessary and valuable her maid became to her, naturally. A thousand instances of long continued deception on the part of young women, begun in mere folly, and continued for the rea-

sons just mentioned, though continued at an immense cost of trouble, resolution, and self-denial in all other respects, are familiar to most readers of strange transactions, medical and otherwise. There seem to be strong grounds for the conclusion that the maid was the principal, if not the sole agent in this otherwise supernatural part of this remarkable story.